ORIENTATION SERVICES PROGRAM REVIEW RESPONSE

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In 2014, Orientation Services participated in an external review utilizing the resources and expertise of the Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education (NODA) Consultant program. During this process, Dr. Gregory Walcott and Dr. Richard Mullendore engaged in a three-month process of evaluating all orientation operations and programming. Their review included two on-campus visits. The first allowed them to meet with campus partners that work closely with Orientation Services to implement Orientation programming. The second visit allowed them to observe both the Freshmen and Transfer orientation programs. The recommendations resulting from this review, and our responses to them, are in including in the following document.

Overall Impressions:

The reviewers' overall evaluation of Orientation Services stated that the orientation programs are exceptionally well organized and comprehensive. These programs meet student needs, comply with national standards, meet Federal mandates, and assist new students in their introduction to both the academic and co-curricular life of the University.

Reviewer Recommendations:

Recommendation 1:

- The Orientation staff, with assistance from superiors, should chart a course for the future and determine capacity of their staff. Many campuses are moving toward a more comprehensive department model that coordinates orientation, FYE, and related programming.

Orientation Services Response:

- Orientation Services agrees that there should be greater coordination with the Freshmen Year Experience Program and provide extended transition programming beyond orientation. The Senior Coordinator or Program Coordinator will request to be part of the FYE university-wide committee.

Recommendation 2:

- The current level of staffing should be examined in relation to other CSU schools of similar size and scope. This examination should take place in the context of the capacity analysis. At this point, it appears the current model of two professional staff and one administrative staff may not be sufficient to meet current demands, let alone additional responsibilities. Reclassification of the Senior Coordinator role should also be seriously considered.

Orientation Services Response:

- In preparation for the program review, Orientation Services conducted a benchmarking exercise. This revealed that there was not much consistency in staffing across the CSU campuses. Some offices had personnel that had shared responsibilities in other areas (e.g., outreach, student life, etc.) while others had robust and dedicated staff year round. The staffing level depended on the programs' structure and format. It is important to note that the benchmarking exercise did

reveal that Cal Poly Pomona's program is one of the most comprehensive programs in the CSU and a pioneer in making orientation mandatory for its incoming students.

Recommendation 3:

- The orientation schedule should be analyzed in terms of goals and outcomes, with specific attention toward identifying components that relate directly to the academic mission and goals of the university.

Orientation Services Response:

- This is an ongoing process and one that evolves as the University's priorities and goals change. For example, as the University gets closer to semester conversion, the program will have play an important role in implementing a program that supports students through this specific transition.

Recommendation 4:

- The transfer student population should be examined for demographic factors to address the myths vs. facts about this group.

Orientation Services Response:

- Orientation Services has reviewed the literature available on the needs of transfer students. We have also conducted several assessments to help us better understand the needs of our transfer students, their expectations for orientation, and reflections on their orientation experiences. One of the most salient assessments we have conducted is a post-first quarter survey in which we asked transfer students aspects of orientation that were helpful during their first quarter at Cal Poly Pomona and what aspects they wish they would have liked to aid them or facilitate their success at Cal Poly Pomona. The results of that assessment were riveting and will have an influence on future programming for transfer students. It is also important to note that we have collaborated with the newly created PolyTransfer program to better understand the needs of transfer students and support transfer students beyond their orientation experience.

Recommendation 5:

- We recommend that the campus examine the various groups involved to carry out orientation functions to assess overlap, efficiencies, and training. These groups include orientation leaders, registration assistants, and Poly Transfer ambassadors.

Orientation Services Response:

- This recommendation will become part of our on-going evaluation process. In regards to the training of orientation leaders, registration assistants, and PolyTransfer ambassadors, we plan to implement one or several training sessions that will benefit these peer mentors/advisors equally. This would help reduce the inconsistency in information provided to incoming students regarding academic and registration policies and procedures.

Recommendation 6:

- The issue of housing should be examined in relation to orientation. Rather than using orientation as a tool to "sell" housing, equal attention should be provided to students and parents/families/guests about how to navigate students living on campus and students who will commute. In addition, better communication regarding the rationale for extending the orientation program would be helpful. This could take place in a joint-session format.

Orientation Services Response:

- Orientation Services is unsure where the perception that orientation is an opportunity to "sell" housing came from, as we promote all engagement opportunities to students—housing being one of them. Freshmen students who reside outside of the local admissions area are required to live on campus, so there is a steady demand for housing. Orientation Services acknowledges the benefits of students living on-campus. Perhaps, Orientation does not provide a clearer rationale as to why first-year students have to spend the night in the residence halls during orientation. We, however, agree that there should be an emphasis on how commuter students can be supported and become engaged on campus as well.

Recommendation 7:

- According to data from the program evaluation, the advising experience during orientation could be improved. An articulation agreement should be developed between student affairs and academic affairs related to the outcomes of the advising and registration sessions during orientation. i.e., all students will understand GE requirements, how to register, and will leave orientation having registered for 12 units.

Orientation Services Response:

- Orientation Services agrees with this recommendation and has already established an agreement with the Associate Provost and Associate Deans to ensure that these objectives are met across the different academic colleges. There is no way that we can attest if and how these objectives are being accomplished, but there seems to be a consensus amongst our partners that these aspects are important for all students to know and do during their advising period in their colleges.

Recommendation 8:

- According to data from the program evaluation, some students felt the freshman and transfer program was too long. Efforts should move forward to further orientation activities into the fall, and perhaps even into the freshman year, to alleviate the burden on the orientation program and reduce "information overload."

Orientation Services Response:

- Orientation services will evaluate this data closer and make a determination how we can make the program more engaging/interactive or use technology to supplement some of the information online. With additional system, state, and federal mandates being placed, it will be

challenging to shorten the time of orientation, but will certainly re-evaluate the structure of the program in response to the data and this recommendation.

Recommendation 9:

- Consider utilizing online education and technology to introduce students to wellness, counseling, alcohol abuse, and safety as well as Bronco direct training prior to orientation. There are various programs on the market that could be purchased to meet this need as well as campus trainings available. This approach could help maximize the time when students on campus, and in terms of Bronco direct training, improve students' overall advising and registration experience.

Orientation Services Response:

- Orientation Services currently uses BlackBoard to provide an online orientation to students who cannot attend a physical orientation. BlackBoard can be leveraged to provide a supplemental orientation to all students. We will also explore other systems and make this a priority for future years.

Recommendation 10:

- Develop a mission using CAS Standards as a model, which also reflects the University mission and motto of "Learn by doing."

Orientation Services Response:

- Orientation Services has developed the following mission statement, department goals, and learning outcomes that are reflective of CAS Standards and the larger University and Divisional mission and goals. The newly developed document can be viewed on our website and will continue to be shared with campus partners to clarify our objectives. See below for a copy of that document.

Mission: Orientation Services at Cal Poly Pomona facilitates the transition of new students into the institution; prepares them for educational opportunities and student responsibilities; and initiates their integration into the intellectual, cultural, and social climate of the university.

Goals:

1. **Orientation Services provides information and support to build an identity as a life-long learner.**
   Learning Outcomes:

   a. Students will create an academic support system by identifying their advisor and key faculty members in their academic department.
   b. Students will understand how their CPP education will prepare them to not only be a competent professional, but an engaged citizen of the world.
   c. Students will employ university tools (curriculum sheet, roadmap, BroncoDirect, and myCPP) to plan and meet their academic goals.

d. Students will be learn how high-impact practices such study abroad, research, internships, and community engagement will allow them to grow personally and professionally.

e. Students will identify strategies and supports that will support them in being academic successful at CPP and throughout their lives.

2. **Orientation Services provides opportunities for social integration and community engagement.**
   a. Students will meet and have the opportunity to engage in meaningful relationships with other incoming students, current CPP students, faculty, staff, and administrators.
   b. Students will identify opportunities to engage fully in the university community through club and organization participation, connection with identity-based communities such as the cultural centers or academic departments, and engagement with curricular and co-curricular activities and programs.
   c. Students will reflect on and discuss their diverse identities and how they may shape their experiences at the institution.
   d. Students will learn key facts about the institution's history, campus culture, and ongoing traditions.

3. **Orientation Services empowers students to be active and aware community members.**
   a. Students will reflect on the steps they can take to be a responsibly campus community member.
   b. Students will engage in discussions of identity, diversity, and personal experience.
   c. Students will learn critical campus policies and key university deadlines to ensure that they are meeting all enrollment requirements
   d. Students will identify programs and services aimed at providing academic, emotional, and practical support to ensure that they are successful.

4. **Orientation Services enables parents, family members, and other guests to actively support their students.**
   a. Parents, family, and guests will identify the relational and developmental changes students may face as a result of the transition to CPP.
   b. Parents, family, and guests will learn about the academic expectations and campus culture of CPP.
   c. Parents, family, and guests will be able to identify and seek out the offices and resources that will help support their student's transition.

Recommendation 11:

- Review the length and structure of the program, utilizing feedback from students, the Orientation Advisory Committee, and the Associate Dean's Council to ensure that they align with specific goals and outcomes. Communicate the changes made, based on assessment feedback, to campus partners to demonstrate commitment to data-driven programming.

Orientation Services Response:

- Orientation Services will continue to use the revised mission, goals, and learning outcomes, Orientation Services as a platform to discuss program planning with campus partners. Orientation Services will also continue to consult campus partners on the development of assessments, and share assessment results with these same partners to demonstrate our commitment to best practices. Further, Orientation Services commits to continuing to meet regularly with the Orientation Advisory Council, Associate Deans Council, and Council of Chairs.

Recommendation 12:

- Specific programming recommendations include:
  - Examining the logistics of implementing a 2-day, 1-night option
  - Planning better to ensure that programs stay on time
  - Providing sessions early in the program that foster community for students

Orientation Services Response:

- Orientation Services will implement the following changes in subsequent summers:
  - Build in increased transition time and breaks to ensure that programs times stay on track
  - Implement 2 sessions early in the program ("Meet Your Orientation Leader" and "Embracing Your New Colors") that promote relationship-building with group members, teach students about CPP culture, and fosters University pride and engagement with the campus community
- Orientation will continue to explore opportunities to reframe the program to occur over two days, however, with the increased requirements related to Title IX and Semester Conversion, this may not be possible.

Recommendation 13:

- Increase the length of the transfer program to provide opportunities for sessions that promote diversity.

Orientation Services Response:

- Utilizing our feedback from Transfer assessments, Orientation Services has determined that many students find the one-day format ideal, however, there is an interest in a longer program for some. As a result, Orientation Services plans to pilot a 1.5 transfer orientation program that allows for more time for advising as well as opportunities to build community and meet other transfer students within their college and in the general campus community.

Recommendation 14:

- Revisit the classification of the Senior Coordinator role to reflect the responsibilities associated with the position.

Orientation Services Response:

- This recommendation has been forwarded to the Associate Vice President. The implementation of this recommendation will depend on the division's strategic plan and budget. We do agree that a new title and reclassification would carry more weight when speaking with our partners across campus.

Recommendation 15:

- Re-examine the make-up of the Orientation Advisory Council and explore ways to ensure that members are accountable to and for their constituency.

Orientation Services Response:

- Orientation Services feels confident that the make-up of the Orientation Advisory Council (OAC) accurately reflects the campus partners most actively involved with the implementation of components of orientation related to advising and registration. Orientation Services commits to engaging in continued conversations with the Associate Deans and the Council of Chairs to facilitate communication between the administrative decisions made and our partners who will implement the vision.

Recommendation 16:

- Provide a wired printer at Transfer programs to allow students to be able to print documents onsite.

Orientation Services Response:

- Orientation Services is partnering with Informational Technology and the Registrar's Office to have a printer available at Transfer check-in to print Transfer Credit Reports for students that were not able to bring them, or who were not able to obtain their most updated information.

Recommendation 17:

- Develop programs and opportunities to serve special student populations such as international students and graduate students. Explore purchasing an online orientation software package to meet this need.

Orientation Services response:

- Orientation Services is engaging in ongoing conversations with the Office of Admissions and Outreach, the International Center, and University Housing to pilot an on-campus orientation for Freshmen International students. This program will take place a few days before classes start to ensure that students are able to be in the country for the program. Further, processes will be implemented to allow students to register for classes prior to the start of the first on-campus orientation of the summer.

- Orientation is also engaging in ongoing conversations with the Graduate Studies Office to explore options for both online resources for graduate students as well as the potential for an optional on-campus event open to all graduate students. Assessment data collected from this event will drive future directions for these efforts.
- Orientation Services continues to explore options for online orientation programs but finds the cost to be a prohibitive factor at this time. We will continue to work with our existing Blackboard system to update modules and increase the effectiveness of the training. We will reach out to peer institutions who are using similar models to determine best practices.